

PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

2024-2025

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

STUDENTS • ALUMNI • FACULTY • EVENTS



Program in Jewish Studies
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR SAMIRA K. MEHTA DIRECTOR

It has been a busy fall for the Program in Jewish Studies and I am delighted to be back from a fun and productive year at Harvard and to rejoin the community at CU Boulder and in particular here in PJS. Felicia Naranjo Martinez joined the PJS team while I was gone—Thomas Pegelow Kaplan says that he was looking to hire someone in the position of Finance and Business Operations Manager with whom I would get along, and friends, he succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Felicia and I have forged a wonderful and productive working relationship. I remain very grateful to Thomas for taking the helm as the interim director, while I was away. Thank you again to Thomas! We are also delighted to welcome Professor Elias Sacks back the University of Colorado after 18 months away. It is wonderful to have him back among us! We are also delighted to welcome Nir Evron, who has joined us for the year, while on leave from the University of Tel Aviv.

We, in the Program in Jewish Studies, continue to work to provide an education that is grounded in Jewish history, culture, and texts while also meeting the needs of the moment, and to that end, faculty members have developed or are developing new classes on topics ranging from a history of Jews in the Middle East to antisemitism to the role of sexuality and religion in the politics of American healthcare. We also continue to provide community for our students. The Student Advisory Board, under the leadership of Sam Boyd and some truly spectacular students, has put together a range of events, including Pickleball with Professors. Hilary Kalisman continues to lead the graduate students in a regular colloquium, where they share and workshop each other's work. Inspired by the community that we see among the students, the rest of the Executive Committee and I have decided to host one brown bag lunch each semester, so that the faculty can take turns sharing our work with each other. It has been a joy to start to learn even more about my colleague's work.

This past October held our first salon outside of the Boulder area, with a wonderful event on the Upper West Side. Manhattan is beautiful in October, and it was exciting to meet so many people with a commitment to the field of Jewish Studies.

On the subject of meeting people, we look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events!

Best,



Samira K. Mehta



SPRING CONFERENCE HONORING DAVID SHNEER Z"l

David Shneer z"l was the inaugural Louis P. Singer Endowed Chair in Jewish History, Professor of History and Jewish Studies, and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. He played a key role in bringing the world's largest privately owned Holocaust archive, the Harry Mazal Holocaust Collection, to CU Boulder in 2014.

He was a brilliant man and an extremely intellectually generous colleague, who could always see someone else's potential. His intellectual generosity touched many in his fields of 20th century European, Russian, and Jewish history and culture.

To honor his legacy, on April 7th and 8th, a small group of scholars from around the world will gather to work on a volume of essays to celebrate the work of our esteemed late colleague. On April 7th, there will be a public program, celebrating both Professor Shneer's scholarly legacy and his program building here at CU Boulder and at the University of Denver. The program will be at 7pm in the Norlin Library, and all are very welcome.



Student Testimonial

"The Program in Jewish Studies at CU Boulder is a collection of students who are passionate about gaining a broader understanding of Jewish history, language, literature, and religion. Led by passionate and dedicated professors, the department encourages students to engage deeply with course material and explore topics beyond the classroom. The professors I've studied under in my time in Jewish Studies have supported me and encouraged me to excel and seek out opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom.



Jess Hall
Class of 2026

One of these opportunities has been to serve on the Jewish Studies Advisory Board, a select group of students that work alongside a faculty advisor to engage with and create events for the students of the Jewish Studies department. These events include bagel brunches, pickleball with your professors, and movie nights, all of which provide a variety of ways for students to connect with faculty and peers. This board has given me the chance to seek out leadership on campus, meet other students in my department, and work closely with my professors to promote events. Although I didn't anticipate becoming a part of Jewish Studies when I first arrived at CU Boulder, the enthusiasm and commitment of the faculty have fostered a welcoming and inspiring environment that has made my time in the program truly rewarding."

SPRING 2025 EVENTS

Programs are free and open to the public.

To learn more and view recordings of past events, visit www.colorado.edu/jewishstudies/events.

JANUARY

2025 Holocaust Remembrance Day Lecture

“‘Love and Mercy’ after the Holocaust:
The Vatican’s Postwar Clemency Campaign”

Monday, January 27, 2025 | 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM (MT) | Dr. Brown-Fleming, Senior Project Director at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum | In-Person at Norlin Library and via Zoom

FEBRUARY

Embodied Judaism Symposium: Jews of Color in the U.S. and Israel

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 | 7:00pm | Ilana Kaufman (Jews of Color Initiative), Marc Dollinger (San Francisco State University), and Bryan K. Roby (University of Michigan) | In-Person at Norlin Library and via Zoom

MARCH

2025 Sondra & Howard Bender Visiting Scholar

“Once We Were Slaves:
Extraordinary Journey of a Multiracial Jewish Family”

Monday, March 3, 2025 | 7:00pm | Dr. Laura Arnold Liebman, Leonard J. Milberg ‘53 Professor in American Jewish Studies at Princeton University | In-Person at the Norlin

APRIL

Spring Conference Honoring David Shneer z”l

Monday, April 7, 2025 | 7:00pm | Details coming soon! Be sure to check the Program in Jewish Studies Website for Registration | In-Person at Norlin Library and via Zoom

STAY TUNED FOR MORE 2025 EVENT DETAILS

Annual Hebrew Schmooze-A-Palooza Concert | Wednesday, March 12, 2025 | UMC 235

Student Research Showcase | Wednesday, April 30, 2025 | CBIS Room on 5th Floor, Norlin Library

EMBODIED JUDAISM

JEWS OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

This year’s Embodied Judaism highlights the oral histories of Jews of Color that are being added to our archive through the [Jews of Color: Histories and Futures](#) project, made possible by funding from the Henry Luce Foundation. Please join Ilana Kaufman (the Jews of Color Initiative), Marc Dollinger (San Francisco State University, author of *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s*), and Bryan K. Roby (University of Michigan, author of *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel’s Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966*) for a panel discussion about the lives, experiences, and histories of Jews of color in the United States and Israel.

Judaism is often considered a religion of the mind, defined by the study and practice of Jewish law, but it also has rich traditions as a religion of the body, engaging sights, sounds, emotions, and feelings of spirituality. The [Embodied Judaism Series](#), held biannually at the University of Colorado Boulder, draws on materials housed in the Innovations in Jewish Life Collections to explore the role of the body in Jewish life through public symposiums, featuring academic scholars, prominent practitioners, and artistic performers, and multimedia exhibits aimed at academic and non-academic audiences.

Sondra & Howard Bender Visiting Scholar

Once We Were Slaves: Extraordinary Journey of a Multiracial Jewish Family

In this talk, Professor Leibman overturns a reclusive heiress’s assumptions about her family history to reveal that her grandmother and great-uncle began as poor, Christian, and enslaved in Barbados. Leibman traces the siblings’ extraordinary journey around the Atlantic world, bringing forth a story of people of mixed African and Jewish ancestry.

Leibman is the Leonard J. Milberg ‘53 Professor in American Jewish Studies. Her work focuses on religion and the daily lives of women and children in early America and uses everyday objects to help bring their stories back to life. Leibman is the current president of the Association for Jewish Studies and a dedicated mentor who long ran a writing workshop for women and non-binary people through the AJS.



Laura Leibman

Student Testimonial

“Since adding a Jewish Studies minor to my degree, I can genuinely say my time at CU Boulder has changed for the better. The students I have met in my Jewish Studies classes are devoted to inclusivity and committed to furthering their education. The professors within the Jewish Studies Department are incredibly caring, accomplished people who go out of their way to ensure their students are succeeding inside and outside of the classroom. The class sizes are much smaller than typical CU classes which has been a great help in meeting friends and fostering a sense of community and belonging. I cannot recommend enough to anyone thinking about adding a Jewish Studies major/minor to go for it; it has continuously been an enriching part of my college experience!”



Ally Keady
Class of 2026

FACULTY UPDATES

As is always the case, our Program in Jewish Studies Faculty has been very busy and we are happy to share these highlights of their 2024 with you:



Sam Boyd writes that he is currently editing a volume for the journal *English Language Notes*, published by Duke University Press, expected out this spring. He also has three forthcoming articles, in the *Journal for Hebrew Scriptures*, in a linguistics handbook, and in an edited volume on the concept of the biblical motif, respectively. He notes that he is loving working with the undergraduate Student Advisory Board, though when he dressed as Roger Federer at their Halloween themed Pickleball with Professors, the undergrads did not know who he was, which made him feel old. **Hilary Kalisman's** article "Apostles of

knowledge: Feminine modernities and the travelling schoolmistresses of interwar Iraq" was published in *Gender & History*. In addition, she presented papers on standardized testing and discrimination in Israel/Palestine at the Middle East Studies Association and on standardized testing, the English language and propaganda at the North American Conference on British Studies. On the teaching front, **Kalisman** developed a new upper-division undergraduate and graduate course, "Jews in and of the Middle East" which focuses on the encounter between Middle Eastern and European Jews from the 14th century through the present. **Yonatan Malin** was invited to Michigan State University as a Distinguished Lecturer in Music Theory; he taught several classes and gave a talk on "Exemplars in Music Theory: A Case Study from Klezmer Music." He is presenting a paper at the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies in December, "The Musical Tapestry of Klezmer: A Computational Approach to Beregovski's Jewish Instrumental Folk Music." **Malin** is collaborating with the computational musicologist Daniel Shanahan from Northwestern University; they have created the website "[Modes in Klezmer Music](#)" with selected results. He has also enjoyed playing with the band Jubilee Klezmer and he started a monthly klezmer jam for community members. **Samira Mehta** spent academic year 2023-2024 as a Visiting Associate Professor of North American Religions and as the Colorado Scholar at the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard University, where she completed a draft of her manuscript *God Bless the Pill: Contraception and Sexuality in American Religion*. In addition to her normal conference circuit, she was an invited speaker at a conference at Harvard on "Jews and Black Theory" and gave talks at Harvard, Yale, Brown, the University of Wisconsin Madison, the University of Virginia, Hampshire College, and Smith College. **Thomas Pegelow Kaplan** published several articles, including "[Global Transit, Imperial Performativity and Survival: European Jewish Refugees in the Philippines Under U.S. Tutelage and Japanese Occupation, 1937-1946](#)" in the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book LXIX* (2024). He also gave a number of lectures/papers, among others in the NC German Studies Workshop Series; at the Free University of Berlin; the Center for Research on Antisemitism, TU Berlin; the GHI West's Germanists' Workshop at UCLA, the Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany; and the Holocaust Educational Foundation's Lessons and Legacies XVII at Claremont McKenna College. Along with receiving CU's "Best Should Teach" award, **Eyal Rivlin** was promoted to full Teaching Professor. The Nonbinary Hebrew Project which Professor Rivlin cofounded received the Rise Up Grant (Nurturing the Soul of Jewish Justice) to further develop resources and accessibility. **Rivlin** also led and facilitated the music for the Oct 7 community memorial ceremony at the Boulder JCC. During 2024, **Elias Sacks** spoke at institutions including the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and officially began his role as an international cooperation partner for a €1,200,000 Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft grant (led out of the University of Hamburg) exploring the role of rabbinic literature in modern debates about Jewish civic and social status across Europe. He was also recruited by the Yale Jewish Studies Program and Yale University Press to co-edit and co-translate the first English edition of the *Moreh Nevukhei Hazeman (The Guide of the Perplexed of the Time)*, the unfinished Hebrew magnum opus of the influential Eastern European Jewish philosopher and communal leader Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840). **Sacks's** forthcoming publications include articles and book chapters on the first verse-by-verse Hebrew commentary on the gospels by a traditionalist rabbi, the role of philosophy in Jewish and Muslim life, and other topics.

2024 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Through our Undergraduate Research Assistant program, the Program in Jewish Studies provides University of Colorado Boulder undergraduate students with opportunities to collaborate with faculty on cutting-edge research projects by asking new questions, producing new knowledge, and sharing their findings with diverse audiences.

- **Trial Data from the Portuguese Inquisition of Coimbra**
Hannah Zaritsky (with Prof. Rebecca Wartell)

We are grateful for a generous gift from Joseph Goldhammer and Elizabeth Block that has transformed this initiative into an annual program, supporting a range of undergraduate research positions and a student research showcase event each spring. We're deeply thankful to Joseph and Elizabeth for this opportunity to support and empower CU students as they cultivate diverse skills, build mentorship relationships, and share their work with the broader community.



2024 SCHMOOZE-A-PALOOZA HEWBREW CONCERT



Last year's Schmooze-A-Palooza concert featured Hebrew songs of peace and hope, performed by the CU Hebrew students, faculty, and larger community. Backed by a live band, students took their language knowledge beyond the classroom and offered a participatory, communal celebration of Hebrew learning. CU students, along with the general public, was invited to come sing along, and listen to fellow classmates rock out in Hebrew. This event is always free and open to the public!

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2024!

MAJOR IN JEWISH STUDIES

Regina Jordan Saad

MINOR IN JEWISH STUDIES

Robert Benjamine Levine

MINOR IN HEBREW & ISRAEL STUDIES

Elina Landrum
Regina Jordan Saad

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN JEWISH STUDIES

Michael Clifton Bunch, PhD
Doctor of Philosophy in History

Student Testimonial

"The Program in Jewish Studies has a very broad definition of the field, opening the possibility to not only work in my research, but also to interact with different students, themes, and possibilities. When I came to CU Boulder, I was struggling to organize the ideas I had for my dissertation; I knew the region I wanted to work with, but I was being challenged to create a good reasoning about my topic on identities in Early Modern Europe. Through the Jewish Studies Graduate Colloquium I was able to share ideas, thesis, and possibilities building my argument and being able to write my research papers and to develop a structure to write my dissertation. The Program in Jewish Studies has been central to my development as a more complete historian than I would be without its meetings, programs, and incentives."



Augusto Rocha
Class of 2027

YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Alumni, donors, friends and community supporters bring the Program in Jewish Studies to life! Because of your commitment to PJS, we are able to provide students with the critical thinking and communication skills they need to navigate a diverse world and become leaders in their communities. Your gifts also help foster community education, support faculty research and staff professional development, and cultivate archival resources.

Thank you for your commitment to expanding the boundaries of academic learning.

Please support Jewish Studies by making a donation through the enclosed envelope or online at:
www.colorado.edu/jewishstudies/giving

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Program in Jewish Studies Advisory Board is comprised of strong supporters of Jewish Studies. The mission of the board is to help the Program obtain resources for maintenance and growth, enhance the Program's reputation within CU and beyond, and help the Program facilitate community engagement and development within Colorado. We are grateful for the board's dedicated work to expand the reach of Jewish Studies on campus and in the wider community. Thank you for all you do.

Larry Cohn, *Chair*
Barry Baer
Shane Ball
James Brantz
Jim Edelman

Ira Greschler
Midge Korczak
Johnathan Lev
Douglas Sparks
Jack Zable

Samira Mehta, *Director*
Felicia Naranjo Martinez, *Staff Support*
Jazmin Kay Brooks, *Advancement*